A Study in Application of Bharata's Theory of *Rasanispattih*

With special reference to:

Kalidas's *Shakuntala*

Bhavabhuti's *Malati Madhava*

William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*

A Synopsis

For

The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

(**2016**)

Submitted to

Dayalbagh Educational Institute

(Deemed University)

Dayalbagh Agra

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Aesthetics or the beauty of arts in India, has been studied not only with reference to music or pictorial representation but also in context to the dramatic presentation. Musical representations have been regarded as auxiliaries to drama. The reason behind this is that the various situations of life, which Art makes its province to depict, lead themselves to a more successful presentation in drama than in any other class of art. Kanti Chandra Pandey in his book *History of Indian Aesthetics* stated that "Drama marshals all other arts including that of poetry to its aids" (1).

The Indian poetics is evolved out of the dramaturgy and the oldest existing work on Indian Poetics is the *Natyasastra* by Bharatmuni. It is the pillar on which the whole of the subsequent mansion of the Indian Aesthetic theory has been erected. Bharata conceived of Drama as the synthesis of all the arts and gave to India a monumental treatise full of detailed suggestions for integrating libretto, stage effects, dance, music & histrionics into an organism, the soul of which is the aesthetically experienced emotion, the *Rasa.*

G.K Bhatt in his book *On Natya and Rasa* opines that "Whether it was Abhinavgupta, Mammata or Viswanath, discussing poetry and literature during the subsequent centuries, they inevitably turned to Bharata's formulations as the pole star of Indian Aesthetics" (1).

The *Rasa- Siddhanta* occupied a prestigious place among the schools of Indian Poetics and Bharatmuni is acknowledged to be the first exponent of the *Rasa* theory, which he has systematically set- forth in his celebrated treatise on dramaturgy, the *Natyasastra. Rasa* was recognized as an element of decoration by the *Acharyas* of the *Alamkara* School, who did not assign any over- riding importance to it. It was only with the passage of time and with the progress of critical speculations that *Rasa* came to be identified as the central element of literary composition.

The Indian view of art may be said to lie in the aesthetic conception of *Rasa*. A work of art may be said to be *Rasavant*, meaning having *Rasa*, the critic or the spectator who enjoys *Rasa* may be called *Rasika.*

The word *Rasa* is the simplest and at the same time the most bewildering expression in the Sanskrit Language. The word may convey different meanings in different contexts, but its essential core remains unaltered. The word *Rasa* literally means 'essence' or 'elixir'. It also means relish or flavour. G.K Bhatt, in his book *On Natya and Rasa* has stated that "The term *Rasa* has a twofold significance; it means the aesthetic content of literary art and also aesthetic relish which the reader- spectator observes" (6).

The *Rasa* theory essentially deals with various kinds of emotions and how they are depicted, inferred and transmitted through a work of art. Literature is essentially about life and its emotions and the problem that confronts a critic is to find out how, in a work of art, an emotion is depicted, suggested and how it is finally communicated to the reader. The greatest merit of *Rasa* system consists in the fact that it has erected its magnificent edifice on the solid foundation of the commonality of human feelings and emotions.

In the *Natyasastra* Bharata has set forth a formula that explains how *Rasa* is generated in a work of art. It has been studied mainly in its application to poetry and drama. Bharata, in his book *Aesthetic Rapture: The Rasadhyaya of the Natyasastra* writes: "*Rasa* comes from the combination of the *Vibhavas*, the *Anubhavas* and the *Vyabhicaris* (*Vibhavanubhavavyabhicarisamyogad rasa–nispattih)"* (46). Thus the evocation of *Rasa* depends upon the appropriate combination of the *Vibhavas, Anubhavas* and the *Vyabhicaris*. *Bhavas* can be roughly translated as psycho – physiological states in a man and *Sthayibhava, Vibhavas, Anubhavas* and *Vyabhicaribhavas* can be taken to as its kinds. Bharatmuni has enumerated eight *Sthayis*, thirty three *Vyabhicaris* and in

addition to these eight *Sattvikas.* In this way a total of forty- nine *Bhavas* has been enunciated by Bharatmuni. Bharata was asked by the sages to tell where in lies the essence of *Rasas*. While answering this question Bharata says that without *Rasa* no topic of Drama can appeal to the mind of the spectator. Stressing the paramount importance of *Rasa,* Bharata in his book *Aesthetic Rapture: The Rasadhyaya of the Natyasastra* further maintains "For without *Rasa* there can be no (true) meaning i.e. no real poetry" (46).

Bharata believes that it is the *Sthayi* which attains the complexion of *Rasa* and *Rasa* is so called because it is capable of being relished or savoured. Since it is the *Sthayi* which is transformed into *Rasa* becoming relish worthy, the natural question; whose *Sthayi* becomes *Rasa?* and who relishes *Rasa?* Bharata has not furnished any straight answer to these questions. He alludes the tastability of the '*Sthayi'* as though the spectators of a dramatic performance enjoy them as something external to them.

Bharata says in his book *Aesthetic Rapture: The Rasadhyaya of the Natyasastra*:

> As gourmets are able to savour the flavour of food prepared with many spices and attain pleasure etc., so sensitive spectators savour the primary emotions suggested by the acting out of the various *bhavas* and presented with the appropriate modulation of voice, movement of the body and display of involuntary reactions, and attain pleasure etc. (46-47)

Sthayibhavas, which can be translated broadly as stable or permanent states, are those which dominate or persist throughout a work. The *Vibhavas* are the stimuli that activate an emotion. *Anubhavas,* on the other hand, are the external manifestations of the emotions evoked or excited by the *Vibhavas. Vyabhicaribhavas* are the transient emotions. They move in relation to the principal emotions and help it emerge as a *Rasa (*"sentiment").

Rasa is a very subtle state, requiring the pervasive influence of several different kinds of emotions and a host of feelings into fusion before it may be evoked. The Indian writers on poetics classified emotions into two categories i.e. lasting and incidental or transitory. There are eight lasting emotions which are (1) *Rati* ("love") (2) *Hasa* ("laughter") (3) *soka* ("sorrow") (4) *Krodha* ("anger") (5) *Utsaha* ("high-spiritidness") (6) *Bhaya* ("fear") (7) *Vismaya* ("astonishment") (8) *Jugupsa* ("disgust").

A ninth class not generally admitted is *Santa*, that mental state in which we regard the world as transitory or ephemeral. Of the incidental emotions they are as many as thirty- three in number: Despondency, Weakness, Apprehension, Envy, Intoxication, Joy, Agitation, Stupor, Arrogance, Despair, Longing, sleep, Epilepsy, Dreaming , Cruelty, Awakening , Indignation , Dissimulation, Assurance, Sickness, Insanity, Death, Fright and Deliberation etc.

The *Rasas* can be enumerated corresponding to their emotions as the emotion of love and the transitory feelings longing or anxiety, insanity, fever, stupor, death are bound up with the *Sringara* or the Erotic *Rasa*. The high- spiritedness and the incidental feelings like assurance, contentment, arrogance and joy use the signs of the *Vira* or the Heroic *Rasa.* Anger and the attendant feelings of indignation, intoxication, recollection, inconstancy, envy, cruelty, and agitation occur with the *Raudra Rasa* or the *Rasa* of fury. Mirth with its accompanying states indolence, weariness, weakness and stupor may arouse the *Hasya Rasa*. Astonishment and the feelings of Joy, agitation, distraction and fright provoke the *Adbhuta Rasa* or the *Rasa* of wonder. The emotion of sorrow is conductive to the production of *Karuna Rasa* or the *Rasa* of Pathos. Disgust and the ephemeral feelings of agitation, sickness provoke the *Bibhasta Rasa* or the *Rasa* of indignation. The emotion of fear produces the *Bhayanaka Rasa* or the *Rasa* of terror.

The *Rasas* are also identified with certain colours and with certain divinities. The Erotic *Rasa* is a *syama* ("shining dark") and its presiding deity is *Vishnu.* The comic is said to be white and *Pramatha* is its presiding deity. The compassionate is light grey and *Yama* is its God. The furious is said to be red colour and its presiding deity is *Rudra.* The heroic *Rasa* go as with the colour wheatish brown and its presiding deity is *Indra.* The Terrifying is of black colour and *Kala* is its god. The disgusting is associated with blue and *Mahakala* is its deity. The astonishment is allied to yellow and its deity is *Brahma.*

Bharata believed that without *Rasa* no topic of drama can appeal to the mind of the spectators.

G.K Bhatt, in his book *On Natya and Rasa* opines:

> Just as people in a contended state of mind (sumanasah), eating the food prepared well (*samskrta*) with various spicy things taste the flavour (enjoy the various tastes) and obtain delight and satisfaction (*harsadin),* in the same manner spectator in the right (*perceptive*) frame of mind (*sumanasah*) taste the permanent mental condition, suggested (*Vyanjita*) by the representation (abhinaya) of various emotional states and obtain pleasure and satisfaction. (7)

Bharatmuni describes the qualification of the *Preksaka* ("the beholder"). He mentions one of them as the beholder's capacity to identify himself with the hero or the characters in the play. Evidently the mention of *Tusti* ("satisfaction") on both sides suggests the gratification of emotions and from this the natural inference to be drawn is that the emotions portrayed in drama, belong to the hero or the character concerned. Bharatmuni considers a close connection between the emotions of the writers and the hero. As for the writer, he comes to acquire and imbibe the emotions from the story selected by him for the delineation i.e. the hero emotions become the writer's emotions

during the moments of creation. The *Sthayi,* enacted and developed, appertains both to the hero and the writer. This achieves *Rasahood*. This is how *Rasa* embraces the process of creation, recreation, execution and appreciation. The fact, however, is that it is the two – fold experience i.e. the experience of the creation as also that of the reader and the audience. This is to say that *Rasa* is generated on the stage by virtue of the concerned *Sthayi* being evoked and developed on the stage and then it is relished, tasted, and enjoyed by *Preksaka* ("the beholder").

Bhatta Lollata is the earliest commentator of *Natyasastra*. According to him *Rasa* resides in both: the hero and *Nata* ("the actor") primarily in the former and secondarily in the latter. It is so because the actor can perform the role on the stage when he feels the *rasa* present in the character portrayed by the writer. The writer has to feel the characteristics and action of the hero through his imagination. Until he feels the same *Rasa* he is not able to portray the role of the hero on the stage. In other words, the actor or *Nata* attributes the hero hood to himself and thus the *rasa* which originally belonged to the hero comes to reside in him. There is little difference between two interpretations both of which attach the *rasa* originally to the hero and then transfer it to the actor. It is evident that Lollata is inspired directly or indirectly by Bharat's stance. Both the hero and the writer may be regarded as the *Asraya* or the seat of the *rasa.* The spectator here start wrongly imagining the *Nata* to be the hero and his emotions existing in the *Nata*. The action is so represented by the *Nata* that it grips the mind, heart, and soul of the spectators. This causes delight in the mind of the spectators.

Sankuka happens to be the second commentator. He does not regard the original hero or the character as the *Asraya* or repository of *rasa* because it is the *Sthayi* which resides in him and not the *rasa.* Likewise, the *Nata*, too is not the *Asraya* of rasa because rasa is only initiated by him. The *Sthayi,* too does not reside in the *Nata*, it only appears

to be existing in him by virtue of his dramatic representation on the stage and the witnessing of his performance generates the enjoyment or relish.

In his well-known exposition, called *Abhinavabharati* of the *Natyasastra*, he has delineated his concept of *Rasanubhuti*. He predicates that only a person, endowed with a heart with the keen faculty of perception is authorized to appreciate the *Rasa.* He gives the term *Sahridaya* to such a person as R.S Tiwari in his book *A Classical Approach to Indian Poetics* opines that, "Sensitive readers are people who have the capacity of identifying with matter under description in poetry because the mirror of their heart has become clear (or polished) due to their repeated reading and contemplation of poetry" (26). Sensitive readers and critics are indispensable for the proper evaluation of poetry.

Abhinavgupta's unique and supreme contribution to the elucidation of *Rasanabhuti* consists in his enunciation that the emotions reside in the *Samajika's* soul in the shape of *Vasnas* (instincts) or *Samskaras*, by reason of their being transmitted and inherited by us from birth to birth. He states that the relish of *Rasa* altogether novel and unique is a mental function in which the *Sahridayas* taste the *Sthayi* experiencing loveliness, resulting from a contact with the *vasnas* of pleasure and pain. Thus the *Sthayis* are the innate instincts which characterize the living being from birth. Everyone seeks pleasure, ridicules others on account of pride, is pained when separated from the desired objects, is angry at the causes of such separation and wishes to abandon many things. These mental states have their traces in every human being, only some have them to a greater extent while others have them to a smaller extent. These *Sthayis* existing inherently but latently in the soul become felt and experienced under the impact of the dramatic representation or the poet's delineation. *Rasa* then, is simply the enjoyment of one's own nature by consciousness. This experience of self- realization leads to a blissful stage or *Ananda* and the *Rasa* experience is nothing but a bliss or *Ananda.*

Thus a number of critics have tried to write commentary on the rasa theory of Bharata, but the interpretation by Abhinavgupta has been accepted by almost the whole rhetorical tradition in India.

Rasa thus grown out is a consummation of the emotion presented in art and for how a work of art presents or conveys an emotion Indian Poetics has an answer that is by no means unique to it: a literary work does through the objective co-relatives of the emotion, images, characters, situations, dialogues which are the objective co-relatives of the emotion are presented in a drama and when the reader's mind makes contact with these, they awaken the corresponding *Sthayis* within him.

Objective co-relatives are primarily representation in art of the actual causes or actual consequences or manifestations of an emotion in life. Representation of causes are called *Vibhavas* and representation of manifestation are called *Anubhavas*. The actual factors of an emotion in life are thus transformed into the ideal conventional associates of the same emotion in art. They have a purely aesthetic existence; they are not real or practical, but idealized; they are not personal or particular, but universalized. They have no conative drift and are the objects of a detached untroubled contemplation not resulting in leading to any action. When the sensuous objects of an emotion impinge upon an emotional set latent in the reader's consciousness, the two coalesce and give rise to the state of aesthetic satisfaction known as *Rasa.*

The *Rasa* has its close connection with the relish of aesthetic pleasure in art. The aim of literature is to create a sense of delight as well as to give an experience of the actual. But it creates a complete problem for a literary artist as to how to combine a bitter experience with the required sense of relish.

For this the Sanskrit scholars argue that the aesthetic experience is an absorption. It is complete and self-contained and when we talk of transcendence in art, in one respect,

it is taken to mean transcendence from the world of practical investment and therefore referring to the detachment of aesthetic attitude.

Art has two fold purposes to serve viz. to delight as well as to teach. Hence art/ literature has to create the relish or the *Rasa* and at the same time impart the cherished value. The writer will therefore, organize his stimuli , the situations the incident, music, expression or language in a way that eliminating all possibilities of practical reactions to the situations a reader/spectator feels liberated and gets the relish of aesthetic pleasure and realization of aesthetic values.

To sum up, *Rasa* is important like a seed which sprouts into a tree and which again blossoms and bears the fruit. It is indispensable to any work of art. It is necessarily communicated to the audience or at least makes its presence felt for unless it is communicated, how can we know that *Rasa* resides in the work? Finally, its function is to make a work more appealing. This is equivalent to the saying that only *Rasa* can make a work successful.

A drama, eastern or western, is always full of emotions. Whether it is Kalidas or Shakespeare there is no dearth of emotions in the work. Hence an in-depth study in the field would provide ample scope for exploration of a new vision. To limit the area to a permissible length the works selected for the study are Kalidas's *Abhijnanashakuntala,* Bhavabhuti's *Malati Madhava,* William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman.*

Kalidas was a classical Sanskrit writer, widely regarded as the greatest poet and dramatist in the Sanskrit language. His plays and poetry are primarily based on the Hindu Puranas. Though the exact time of his fame is not known, it is estimated that he survived around the middle of the 4th or the 5th century A.D. The poems he wrote were usually of epic proportions and were written in Sanskrit. His creations were used for fine

arts like music and dance. His major works include the plays like *Malavikagnimitra, Shakuntala*. He has also written the epic poems like *Kumaarasambhava,* and the *Raghuvamsha*. There are also two lyric poems written by Kalidasa known as *Meghadutta* and the *Ritusamhara*. *Meghadutta* is one of the finest works of Kalidasa in terms of world literature. The beauty of the continuity in flawless Sanskrit is unmatched till date.

The most famous and beautiful work of Kalidasa is the *Abhijnanashakuntala*. It is the second play of Kalidasa after he wrote *Malavikagnimitra*. *Abhijnanasakuntala* is the crown of Kalidas's poetic excellence. He tells the story of King Dushyanta's love for the hermit girl Shakuntala. The story moves from love at first sight to secret marriage. Later rishi Durvasa's curse falls upon her. She is forgotten by the king. Finally there is reunion in Kasyapa's hermitage. The dramatic skills and poetic diction heighten the pathos and tender emotions of the heroine.

In terms of Rasa, this play is the storehouse of *rasas* and *bhavas*. He described nature, beauty and love with exceptional minuteness. The love of Dushyant for Shakuntala leads to the emergence of the *Rasa* known as *Sringara*. This work clearly reflects the prominent emotion of love.

Another playwright, Bhavabhuti (8th century A.D.) is one of the most renowned poets of ancient India in Sanskrit literature who, according to many critics, ranks next only to Kalidasa as a great dramatist. At the time of Bhasa or Kalidasa probably, literary activity was still in its initial stages with regard to classical Sanskrit literature, but by the time Bhavabhuti appeared on the literary scene, literary traditions were laid on firm foundations. Sanskrit poetics or Alankarasastra based on Bharata's Natyasastra had been engaging the attention of these eminent writers. Bhavbhuti has written three plays which include *Mahavircharita, Malati Madhava* and *Ramcharita.*

Malati Madhava is the second play of Bhavabhuti. The story of this is distributed in ten acts. Bhavabhuti has a great knowledge of Vedas, the Upanishads, the Samkhya and Yoga which is reflected in the play. This play dominantly deals with the *Sringara* or the Erotic *Rasa* as it is the story of two lovers Malthi and Madhav.

William Shakespeare was an English poet, playwright and actor. He was born on 26 April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. He is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre- eminent dramatist. He is often called 'England's national poet' and nicknamed as 'the Bard of Avon'. He wrote about 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems also. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright. His major works include the plays like *Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, The Tempest, Twelfth Night* and many other.

Shakespeare famous play *Hamlet* deals dominantly with *Raudra Rasa* as the story revolves around the story of Hamlet who wants to take revenge from his uncle Claudius of his father's death. This play is the tragedy of the sufferings and hesitation of an honest, strong and responsible man who is not able to kill or punish without having a clear proof of guilt.

If we talk about the twentieth century writers, Arthur Miller is one of the prominent writers of American literature of this age. He was born on October 17, 1915. His major works include the plays like *All My Sons, Death of a Salesman, The Crucible, A View from the Bridge, The Misfits, After the Fall, Incident at Vichy, The Price* and many other. He attempts to create an allegorical expressive form to his tragic vision. All of his protagonists are caught in a situation from which they are incapable to come out and result in catastrophe. In fact a careful explication of Miller's dramatic tenor reveals the moral concept of the playwright. Like Ibsen, Strindberg, Shaw and O'Neill, Miller has used

theatre as platform for interpreting the human dilemma in the twentieth-century, as a growing conflict within human consciousness.

Miller's play *Death of a Salesman* was written in 1949 which has brought immense reputation to Miller's credit. In New York Times the play reviewed as 'must see' play. Miller won all the major awards of the year for *Death of a Salesman*, including 'Pulitzer Prize',' New York Drama Critics' Award', 'The Theatre Club Award', 'Toni Award'. The play is about the life and Death of a Salesman, at times, poetic, tragic, social, realistic and expressionistic. Moreover, the play is remarkable by Venkateswarlu in his book *Humanism and Jewish Drama* as, "the neurosis of the American Dream is projected, with more consistency and complexity both in dramaturgy and symbolic terms"

The play contains the *Karuna Rasa* and *Raudra Rasa* as the story revolves around the protagonist Willy Loman who is marked with initiative, drive ambition, competitive spirit and an urge to be at the top. His quest for upward mobility and consistent realization of failure fills his life with tension which finally leads him to the death.

Thus the elementary study of the selected plays of Kalidas, Bhavabhuti, William Shakespeare and Arthur Miller has brought out some interesting points of convergence in the light of Rasa theory which makes them ideal subjects for a comparative study. A detailed study will definitely provide novel insight. It will also ascertain the comprehensibility and depth of the Indian Poetics. Keeping in view this aim, the objectives of this proposed study will be:

1. To explore the significance of Indian Poetics with special reference to Rasa theory.
2. To make a thematic study of the plays.
3. To analyse the plays within the framework of Bharata's Rasa- theory.
4. To make a stylistic study of the plays.

To attain these objectives, the tentative chapter – Scheme of the proposed study will be**:**

Chapter I: - Introduction of Bharata's theory of *Rasanispatti.*

Chapter II: - *Shakuntala* and Indian Aesthetics.

Chapter III: - *Malati Madhava* and Rasa: A Classical Indian View

Chapter IV: - *Hamlet* and Rasa: An Indian Response.

Chapter V: - Metaphor of Aesthetic Poise: *Death of a Salesman.*

Chapter VI: - Conclusion.

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